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5-KA BROADCAST - BY THE PREMIER (MR. DUNSTAN)

21/10/70.

C.O. Theme - Opening and hold under for

ANN : This is a broadcast by the Premier of South Australia,  
Mr. Don Dunstan, on behalf of the Australian Labor Party.

GOOD EVENING:

WHEN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, MR. KING, INTRODUCED THE CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL ON THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER, HE EXPLAINED IT AS BEING DESIGNED TO "WIDEN THE FIELD OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORS FROM THE NARROW CONFINES OF LAND AND LEASEHOLD OWNERS AND THEIR SPOUSES TO THE BROAD FIELD OF HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ELECTORS". AND THAT IS THE POSITION IN A NUTSHELL.

THE GOVERNMENT WAS ELECTED ON A PLEDGE TO BRING DEMOCRACY TO THE UPPER HOUSE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AND TO CLEAR AWAY PROPERTY PRIVILEGE IN VOTING. AND SO, ON TUESDAY, THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL WAS PASSED IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, 37-8 - WITH TWELVE OPPOSITION MEMBERS CROSSING THE FLOOR TO VOTE WITH THE GOVERNMENT, WHILE THE THIRD READING OF THE BILL, WHICH SENT IT ON TO THE UPPER HOUSE, WAS PASSED LATER, 32-13 - WITH THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, MR. HALL, THE DEPUTY LEADER, MR. MILLHOUSE, AND FIVE OTHER SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION VOTING FOR IT AGAIN.

SO IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THERE IS SOME DIVISION IN THE RANKS OF THE L.C.L. OVER THE IDEA - WHICH TO MOST PEOPLE IS A SIMPLE AND FAIR ONE - THAT EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO WHICH HE PAYS TAXES AND WHOSE LAWS AFFECT HIM. THE L.C.L. PARTY OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT TREAT THE MATTER SO SIMPLY. SOME L.C.L. MEMBERS, IT SEEMS, HAVE AT LEAST SEEN THE ELECTORAL WRITING ON THE WALL. THEY KNOW THAT IN 1970 THE ELECTORS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA HAVE NO TIME AT ALL FOR THE KIND OF ELECTORAL INJUSTICE THE UPPER HOUSE STANDS FOR - AND YET OF COURSE, THEIR HANDS ARE TIED. THEY HAVE ENDEAVOURED TO HAVE IT BOTH WAYS.

IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ON TUESDAY WE HAD THE SAD SPECTACLE OF WATCHING OPPOSITION MEMBERS MOVE AMENDMENTS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S BILL THAT WERE AT BEST CRASS, UNTHINKING, AND MEANINGLESS EXERCISES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS. NO, THEY WOULD NOT ABSOLUTELY SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT'S BILL - YES, THEY BELIEVED IN ITS PRINCIPLES - ALL THE SAME, IT WAS UNFAIR, - AND SO,

WE THEN SAW THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION ARGUE FOR AN UNRESTRICTED FRANCHISE, BUT ONE WHICH ALLOWED VOLUNTARY ENROLMENT FOR THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, VOLUNTARY VOTING FOR THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS ON A DIFFERENT DAY FROM THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.

NOW WHY DID HE DO THAT? - YOU MIGHT WELL ASK. AND THE ANSWER IS CLEAR. THE L.C.L. IN BOTH HOUSES KNOWS THAT IN AN HONEST AND FAIR ELECTORAL SITUATION THAT IT WOULD LOSE CONTROL OF THE UPPER HOUSE. THE L.C.L. IS DOMINATED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BOTH IN FACT AND IN BASIC GOVERNMENT PHILOSOPHY. IT FINDS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTEMPLATE A SITUATION IN WHICH EVERYONE HAS AN EQUAL VOTE FOR THE TWO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. AND SO WE SEE ON THE ONE HAND SOME OPPOSITION MEMBERS SAYING THAT THEY AGREE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S BILL AS AN EXERCISE IN SOME KIND OF CONFUSED PRINCIPLE, AND THEN ON THE OTHER PUTTING FORWARD AMENDMENTS WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO CONFUSE THE ISSUE, TO BE REJECTED, AND ABOVE ALL TO MAKE SURE THAT AT ALL COSTS L.C.L. CONTROL OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IS MAINTAINED.

WELL, THE CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL HAS NOW GONE TO THE UPPER HOUSE, AND WE CAN NOW ONLY WAIT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS. THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, DOES NOT INTEND TO COMPROMISE ON THE ISSUE. IT INSISTS THAT NOT ONLY SHOULD THE UPPER HOUSE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA BE A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED HOUSE, BUT THAT IT SHOULD ALSO BE ELECTED ON THE SAME DAY AND IN THE SAME TERMS AND CONDITIONS AS THE LOWER HOUSE (THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY) IS ELECTED.

THE IDEA THAT THERE SHOULD BE VOLUNTARY ENROLMENT, VOLUNTARY VOTING, AND ELECTIONS ON A DIFFERENT DAY, AS WAS PROPOSED BY MR. HALL, WOULD MEAN THAT IN A COUNTRY WHICH ALREADY HAS TOO MANY ELECTIONS, AND ELECTORAL EXPENSES, WE ARE TO HAVE YET ANOTHER ELECTION PERIOD. AS FOR VOLUNTARY ENROLMENT AND VOLUNTARY VOTING, HERE MR. HALL IS ARGUING FOR A SITUATION IN WHICH THE L.C.L., WITH ITS LARGE ELECTORAL MONEY RESERVES, COULD EFFICIENTLY ORGANISE A "GETTING OUT" OF THE L.C.L. VOTE, BY I SUPPOSE EVERY FORM OF TRANSPORT NECESSARY IN SUCH AN OPERATION. SO SOUTH AUSTRALIA CAN SEE THE NOW FAMILIAR SPECTACLE OF THE LIBERAL COUNTRY LEAGUE PITTED IN BATTLE TO MAINTAIN UNDEMOCRATIC PRIVILEGE IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT. IT IS INCREDIBLE TO PEOPLE

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VISITING THIS STATE FROM EITHER OTHER COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES OR EVEN FROM OTHER AUSTRALIAN STATES, THAT SOUTH AUSTRALIA SHOULD REMAIN WITH AN UPPER HOUSE IN ITS LEGISLATURE THAT HAS MORE POWER THAN THE HOUSE OF LORDS HAD IN 1850. IT IS A SITUATION WHICH CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE - AND THE PRESENT LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN GIVEN A CLEAR MANDATE TO SEE THAT IT DOESN'T.

GOODNIGHT.